ABSTRACT

Applicant's Name: AROOSTOOK COUNTY ACTION PROGRAM, INC. (ACAP) and DOWNEAST COMMUNITY PARTNERS (DCP)

Project Title: *BUILDING ON SUCCESS: OFFERING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO CONNECT WOMEN TO HIGH-WAGE CAREERS IN RURAL MAINE*

Description of Geographical Area: This proposal targets women and employers in the northern one-third of Maine. Among New England states, Maine has the lowest rate of Registered Apprenticeship, at a rate of 30 Registered Apprenticeships per 100,000 people – a rate just 16 percent of neighboring New Hampshire, while Massachusetts has five times the Registered Apprenticeships, adjusting for population. Maine also is the region's most rural and highest-poverty state. Data show that Maine underproduces middle-skilled workers – the workers who could be created through a more robust apprenticeship infrastructure.

There is good reason to target women as the recipients of Registered Apprenticeship, emphasizing non-traditional occupational (NTO) placement, as well as targeting healthcare, where women are concentrated in low-wage occupations. Since a wave of deindustrialization starting in the 1990s, prime-age men's workforce participation dropped sharply – and women have taken up the slack. In some regions, women's workforce participation is higher than that of prime-age men. But the socioeconomic change in Maine has impacted women nonetheless. One in ten babies is born drug-affected. Maternal mortality in the state has skyrocketed. And a 500 percent increase in single-parent headed families has translated into more women and children living in poverty – especially in rural Maine, where training and job opportunities are fewer. The jobs that remain are more highly-skilled than ever – a perfect fit for the apprenticeship model.

Number of Participants to be Served: 100 women; 20 RA sponsors will be developed

Total Cost Per Participant: $3,549.41. Travel and training costs are necessarily higher in rural areas, where populations are dispersed and many businesses are small. Our Y1 project leveraged over $50,000 in funding, or 17% of our total Y1 grant award. The proposed project will leverage as much as $77,500 in WIOA and RA funds to support women's training and support costs.

Funding Level Requested: $354,941

Summary, Including Scope of Project and Proposed Outcomes:

If granted, this proposal will be Year 2 of our WANTO work; in Year 1, we navigated apprenticeship sponsorships with the region's two largest private employers, in addition to sponsorships in production work, safety coordinator, and early childhood specialist. An ongoing expansion of RA capacity would support a profound and measurable systems-level impact for the workforce infrastructure in rural Maine. Employers are grappling with an unprecedented labor shortage, making them more amenable to hiring women into roles where they have been underrepresented in the past. The program will support three WANTO-funded career counselors to provide technical assistance to business and oversee cohort-based trainings leveraging state and federal workforce funds. We also propose to allocate funds to direct client benefit: this will address two of the barriers during our Year 1 experience – our inability to serve would-be WANTO candidates earning minimum wage, who were over-income for WIOA and 2. Transportation from remote towns to training and employment. We project that at least 80 women recruits will complete a pre-apprenticeship and 70% of these recruits will be accepted into the RA phase. We anticipate that at least 70% of our pre-apprenticeship recruits will receive a credential by the end of their pre-apprenticeship cohort and that at least 70% of women accepted into RAs will complete a credential. The average wage for WANTO placements will be at least 150% of the Maine state minimum wage ($13.50) with benefits.